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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: February 20, 1979

*Argentina*  
**AS 062**

SUBJECT : Anti-subversive Campaign Against Vanguardia Comunista (VC)

PARTICIPANTS: Mrs. Marta Poltarak, wife of disappeared VC activist  
Mr. F. Allen Harris, Political Officer, American Embassy,  
Buenos Aires

COPIES TO : ARA/ECA  
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- Mr. Brayshaw  
- Mr. Flood  
- Mr. Buchanan  
- Mr. Lister

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

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Exemption(s):

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( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

Poltarak Disappearance (511/78/E)

Mrs. Poltarak, the wife of VC leader Mauricio Alberto Poltarak visited the Embassy to inform us that her husband is reported to be alive. She provided the following information regarding her husband and his disappearance:

Mr. Poltarak was Secretary-General of the Engineering Students at the University of Buenos Aires in 1965-66 and a Vanguardia Comunista (VC) Party activist. During the 1973 elections he headed one of the VC's provincial campaigns. He was an electrical engineer.

Mr. Poltarak was abducted on July 21, 1978 along with a number of leaders and activists of the Vanguardia Comunista, and interrogated. Several of these VC members who were taken with Poltarak informed their families and International Red Cross that Mr. Poltarak had contracted septicemia from an untreated leg injury which occurred during his interrogation. Mr. Poltarak was removed from the clandestine detention and was presumed by his party colleagues to have died. Mrs. Poltarak said that she has just received information from "a senior Army official" who is a close friend of a friend that her husband is alive and being held clandestinely.

History of the Vanguardia Comunista

The Vanguardia Comunista according to Mrs. Poltarak began as a splinter group of the Partido Socialista Argentina. The VC was composed of middle class intellectuals and workers. Membership peaked in 1973-1974 period at about 5,000 persons. The

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union was led by its leader, Guillermo Juarez, who Mrs. Poltarak described as "un cuadro politico" (a political comar). The Vanguardia Comunista had a permanent objective of "union organizational work." In the early 70's the party abandoned its Socialist Party ideological base and replaced it with a Maoist philosophy. During 1977 and 1978 the VC went through a serious intraparty ideological dispute between Chinese and Albanian factions within the party. This had occupied a great deal of the party's energy in the last 18 months.

Mrs. Poltarak said that the VC was active among the organizers of the Villa Constitucion strikes in 1974, organized 12,000 workers at the Ledesma S.A. plants in Jujuay and was active in union work in Cordoba. In short, the party was directed by middle-class Maoist intellectuals who worked at organizing the working class for political action.

The Vanguardia Comunista formally changed its name at its Second National Congress in February, 1976 to the Partido Comunista Marxista-Leninista. This led to confusion with a terrorist splinter group of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) which used the same PCML name. The new PCML tag is not adopted currently. The Vanguardia Comunista is popularly known as the Vanguardia or the VC, for short.

#### Government Actions Against the VC

Mrs. Poltarak said that there were three phases of governmental action against the Vanguardia Comunista. The first occurred in mid-1975 when police and military forces arrested the VC organizers of the Villa Constitucion strikes in 1974.

The second phase occurred in early 1976, just before and after the March military coup. Three or four VC members who had infiltrated the Montonero movement to conduct intelligence and covert action for the Vanguardia were abducted by military authorities due to their Montonero membership. Mrs. Poltarak said that the purpose of this closely held VC penetration was to counteract the tendency within the Montonero organization to align itself with Cuban and Soviet political models.

From mid-1976 until July 1978 there were, to Mrs. Poltarak's knowledge, no operations run against VC activists. During this period the VC, which was disbanded and declared illegal by government decree in early 1976, continued to recruit new worker members and to reformulate the party's doctrines for the changed political circumstances. However, in July 1978, fifteen VC activists, including her husband, were abducted in clandestine operations by government agents. Fifty to fifty-five other VC members were abducted in August, 1978. All of these operations took place in the greater Buenos Aires area.

Mrs. Poltarak estimated that the government operation netted about fifty percent of the VC's national leadership. Almost all the leaders and activists in the Buenos Aires area were picked up by a very effective dragnet. She said the military "knew who they must torture."

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In the July-August operation a pregnant party member was abducted. She had begun labor. According to the girl's mother, who Mrs. Poltarak met at the Permanent Assembly, her daughter had her baby two days after her abduction and both were released eight days later.

In September, 1978 small groups of VC members began to reappear, generally in small groups of five or six. Party members were "found" by Federal and Provincial Police in trucks or by the side of highways, tied and blindfolded with their signed confessions in their pockets. The VC members were then arrested and generally placed under the military justice system. Mrs. Poltarak said that 35 to 40 VC members have reappeared in this fashion. She said that now that she has news of her husband being alive, she will not continue to see VC party members as it might jeopardize her husband's release and her own security. She noted that the party's senior leaders have not returned. She mentioned a "La Prensa" advertisement run on January 24, 1979, by three of the VC leaders' mothers asking for information regarding their sons (attached).

#### Other Targets

Mrs. Poltarak said that in 1978 she knew of operations conducted against the PST (Partido Socialista de Trabajadores), a Fourth International Trotskyite party, and the Partido Comunista Revolucionario (another Maoist party). The PCR members were strongly attacked, especially in the Cordoba area. Operations were also taken against members of the Política Obrero, a Trotskyite workers' party.

Attachment:

Copy "La Prensa" Advertisement

CLEARANCES:

DCM: MChaplin

POLCOUNS: WHH: H. Timan

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